

# Evaluation of 20 years of FRNs in the Andes



## FRN Approach Evaluation

- Data Sources: Review of secondary information (FRN-related studies, reports, and summaries) and primary data collection (interviews, workshops, surveys n=9.)
- The evaluation assessed both established and newer organizations using the FRN approach and was commissioned and overseen by the FRN and Rural Vitality thematic group of the CoP.



## Success Factors

- Inclusive participation:** Building horizontal relationships between farmers and researchers.
- Valuing smallholder knowledge:** Promoting traditional crop recovery and respecting communal structures.
- Relevant research:** Research conducted with farmers, ensuring direct applicability.
- Flexibility and trust:** Organizations use adaptive methodologies and build mutual trust, facilitating multi-actor knowledge exchanges.
- FRN groups:** They act as spaces for innovation, pre-incubation of rural micro-enterprises, and collaborative research.



## Limiting Factors

- Social context:** Rural-to-urban migration reduces FRN participation, especially as youth leave rural areas.
- Political-institutional context:** Public policies in rural areas often clash with agroecological principles, hindering FRN efforts.
- Farmer perception:** Participation demands significant time, unfamiliar written expression, and regular accompaniment.
- Operational challenges:** Many organizations face logistical difficulties in reaching isolated communities, requiring ongoing farmer support.

## Key Lessons

1. Horizontal scaling and broader impacts are influenced by many external factors.
2. Leadership roles in FRN can overburden farmers, limiting their participation.
3. Sociocultural factors, including differing understandings of terms like "exchange" and "network," shape farmer involvement.
4. Value chain links like processing and marketing are often under-addressed in FRN design.
5. The FRN approach supports food security, traditional knowledge recuperation, and political influence in agroecology but needs unified objectives.